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Book review

Forensic Document Examination. Fundamentals and Current Trends, Jane A. Lewis. Academic Press (2014). ISBN: 978-0-12-416693-6

This book discusses the fundamentals and current trends in forensic document examination. Chapters one and two explained about the history of writing and the history of forensic document examination. These were interesting but brief in the absence of proportionate historical background in each of the description of the different types of paintings, writings, alphabets, and manuscripts. Towards the end of chapter two, lists of 'Pioneers of Forensic Document Examination', of 'Questioned Document Examination' and of 'Forensic Laboratories Established with Questioned Document Sections' were probably better served by referring the reader to appendices. Chapters three and four gave definition about the specialty and discussed about the training required towards the universal acceptance of its basic principle of 'Individuality in Handwriting' in chapter four but again, not without an exhaustive list of research from pages 48 to 52. The fifth and sixth chapters inform the reader about 'Basic Methodology' and 'Instrumentation'. This is interesting especially when the author discussed about the consideration of natural variation in handwriting among other elements to be considered beyond the principle of basic methodology of Analysis, Comparison and Evaluation (ACE) and collectively; the two chapters conveyed the complexity of this specialty which also included the use of different devices. Chapter seven revealed the level of intricacy required within the specialty by use of fascinating examples. Chapters eight, nine, ten, and eleven could have been absorbed into one chapter as most of the information within each chapter is relevant for the Courts. Unfortunately, exhaustive lists of relevant subject matter were in each chapter which in my opinion again could have been better served by placing them in appendices. In chapter

eight, two pages were taken up to list "21 peer-reviewed published standards"; chapter nine, 11 pages of a list of cases; chapter ten, a list of "Mainstream Forensic Science Organizations".

Beyond factual information and a lot of information conveyed by disproportionate lists, I would have liked to read about other information, likened to some commentary or discussions, for example, about practices in countries other than America and Canada and/or any relevance or overlap with medical and mental health issues; these would most likely offer a significant improvement on the content of this book. There was a real opportunity in chapter nine for the author to expand on some well known cases, like the one portrayed by the actor, Leonardo DiCaprio in the movie 'Catch Me If You Can' in 2002. This was based on the real life story of Frank Abagnale Jr whose primary crime was cheque fraud. He eventually helped the FBI to catch other forgers. Some declaration by the author on why these examples of topical subjects were not covered could contribute towards future discussions on an attempt for meta-analytical study of existing practices, partly for comparison and to serve as a platform for future studies/research.

Yvain Rumalean*

London Metropolitan Police, United Kingdom

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom

Care and Quality Commission, United Kingdom

* 63B Romsey Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 5HT,
United Kingdom.

E-mail address: doctorum00@hotmail.com.

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